UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.17/1995/L.5
25 April 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Third session
11-28 April 1995
Agenda item 6

REVIEW OF SECTORAL CLUSTER: LAND, DESERTIFICATION, FORESTS AND BIODIVERSITY

Draft decision submitted by the Chairman

Sustainable mountain development

1. The Commission recognizes that mountain ecosystems and environments are of crucial importance as rich and unique centres of biological and cultural diversity, water stores and sources of minerals. Mountains cover at least one fifth of the Earth's landscape and are home to at least 10 per cent of the world's population, predominantly economically poor people. Mountain ecosystems are complex, fragile, unique in geomorphology, and react sensitively to global climate change. There is a corresponding need for a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to sustainable mountain development as well as for the effective participation and empowerment of mountain people in the use and conservation of mountain resources.

2. The Commission recognizes that with increased accessibility into mountain areas, resource degradation and, in some cases, economic and political marginalization of mountain communities has taken place. In order to reverse this trend and to [eradicate] [reduce] the poverty of mountain people, strategies for mountain development must empower mountain communities to exercise larger control over local resource management and conservation and generate income in sustainable and equitable ways. In this context, the Commission recognizes the central role of women in the sustainable use and management of resources; therefore, the specific needs and constraints of women must be acknowledged and addressed. Furthermore, support is needed to recover and foster the cultural expressions of mountain populations because mountain cultural diversity is a strong and valid basis for the sustainable use and conservation of mountain resources; in this context, the protection of indigenous people's [rights] [interests], including the recognition of their knowledge, should be an integral part of sustainable development.

3. The Commission stresses that the fragility of mountain ecosystems and the adverse impact of the degradation of those systems on highland and lowland populations have not been fully appreciated. The Commission recognizes the importance of mountains as the predominant and most dependable source of freshwater currently used by humanity, and therefore stresses the importance of providing adequate protection for both quality and quantity of water resources from mountainous regions. The Commission recognizes the vital protective function of a stable forest cover for the safeguarding of mountainous settlements and infrastructure. It also urges expanding the network of protected mountain areas to cover all types of mountain ecosystems, strengthening existing management capabilities for conserving mountain ecosystems, species and genetic diversity and promoting local and non-governmental organizations' participation in the management of these areas.

4. In order to ensure an integrated approach to the complexity of mountain ecosystems and the socio-economic issues at stake, the Commission recognizes the need for strengthening the existing institutional mechanisms as well as the knowledge base about mountain ecosystems through research, database development, pilot projects and information exchange, along with support for training in-country of scientific and technical experts and local natural resource managers.

5. The Commission urges interested Governments, with the support of the international community, to prepare and implement comprehensive national and/or local mountain development programmes in relevant countries as outlined in chapter 13 of Agenda 21: 1/ the "mountain agenda". These include strengthening national capacity for sustainable mountain development and the preparation of long-term mountain action plans. Action-oriented projects and programmes should emphasize the long-term monitoring of their environmental, economic and social impacts. Initiatives to implement the "mountain agenda" should incorporate development strategies that address the impacts on mountain communities and ecosystems of, inter alia, production and land-use systems, tourism, transportation policies and energy production and use. These initiatives must incorporate a participatory approach involving all stakeholders, including farmers, women, local and indigenous communities, as well as non-governmental organizations.

6. [In order to facilitate the prompt implementation of these activities, the Commission urges that new and additional financial resources and technical cooperation, including the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, be provided.]

7. The Commission also recognizes that there is a need to take a new look at the overall flow and full-cost pricing of resources and services to and from mountain areas, including water, wood and non-wood as well as range products, energy, mineral resources, tourism and human and government services. The Commission further recognizes the need for a fair share of the benefits derived from the use of mountain resources to remain with the local people and their communities.

8. The Commission notes that there is a need to examine the relationship of chapter 13 with other chapters of Agenda 21 and with the global conventions and

to analyse the extent to which the concerns of mountain areas can be better integrated in their follow-up.

9. The Commission welcomes and supports ongoing efforts in preparing and negotiating subregional and interregional agreements on mountains and, in this context, notes the entry into force of the Alpine Convention as one example, in line with paragraph 13.8 (c) of Agenda 21, of cooperation between countries for the protection of mountain ecosystems.

10. The Commission calls upon Governments and the international community to take action at all levels with the objective of [eradicating] [reducing] poverty in mountain areas, diversifying mountain economies, protecting the environment and food security of local communities, strengthening global information networks and databases, addressing environmental problems, and creating new livelihood opportunities, in the context of appropriate institutional frameworks.

11. The Commission urges interested Governments and organizations, including the private sector, to promote initiatives aimed at raising awareness, including the convening of regional intergovernmental consultations. A wider international meeting involving relevant United Nations bodies could facilitate the exchange of objectives, results and experiences of sustainable development in different mountain regions.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.